

Small Group Study Guide

Avoiding the Temptation to Play God

Series: God's Stump Speech

Matthew 7:15-23

From Sunday May 23, 2021

Take a moment to pray for the Lord to still your mind, as well as direct your thoughts, conversation and response to the study.

Appetizer:

Question: Have you ever been swindled? You trusted something or someone with either your time or your resources or your beliefs, only to find out later that it was all a lie? How did that feel?

Main Course:

Have someone read Matthew 7:15-23. If someone has a copy of the Message version, have them re-read the passage.

At the end of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus gives a warning: Watch out for False prophets. A prophet is someone who speaks for God. That means a false prophet is someone who speaks for God but doesn't.

Question: Who are the influential "prophets" in our society, those who are seen as speaking for God?

Discussion: We live in a world where there is a battle over who represents God. We hear "God language" all the time. Some of it is contradictory, which can be confusing? **What are some contradictory things that we are hearing in society today that we are hearing about within Christianity?**

Jesus gives a simple discernment process to determine who represents God: looking at the person's fruit, which is another word for actions, or what they produce. Their works. **There are other passages in the Bible that also talk about discerning the character of a person. Have someone read 1 Corinthians 12:1-3 and 1 John 4:2. How are these passages similar to what Jesus says?**

We often talk about false prophets as those who teach false doctrines. The language comes up often when we are concerned that a certain theology is

being challenged, like say the divinity of Christ, or the inspiration of the Bible, or how the world will end. Certainly Christians should be aware of ideas that question these truths.

Discussion: However, when Jesus talks about False Prophets, he highlights not their teachings, but their lifestyle. That is an important distinction. **Why is lifestyle so important for those who speak for God?**

In the context of the passage, the will of God is what Jesus has been teaching throughout the sermon on the mount, which has been summed up as the golden rule (Treat others as you would like to be treated) and the great commandment (Love God and love others as yourself).

Question: Do you see the will of God in conflict with any demonstrations of Christianity that we see in North America today? If you do, why do you think that is so?

Dessert:

The sermon ended with a question: Because of the Holy Spirit in our lives, all of us have an opportunity to speak for God. **When we think about how we speak for God, what do we value more than the message of Jesus? (Now, you can't say "nothing", because all of us struggle following the message of Jesus—what values get in the way of this?)**

Challenge: Learning to do the will of God doesn't always come instantly or naturally to us. And God gives us grace for the journey. Here is the challenge. Have each member in the small group commit to practicing one teaching out of the Sermon on the mount this week. In other words, it will form their interactions with people and they will seek opportunities where they can live it out. Take a moment for everyone to scan through the Sermon on the Mount, choose a teaching, and then share it with the group.

Pray for one another, for keeping God's mission front and centre in their everyday lives, and pray that the Holy Spirit would use everyone's willingness to learn to open up doors in other's lives for the sake of God's kingdom.